1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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241 461 476 534 is under way. The size of the *combite* is judged by the number of drums and *lambi*, or conch-shell horns used, for where two or three of either are required, an especially large group of workers is usually assembled. It may be observed in passing that it is undoubtedly the sound of this *combite* drum, heard in the mountains or through the brush by travelers, that has so often been mistaken for the "mysterious booming" of the *vodun* drums.[5]

241 504 252 476 The preparation of the food is the work of the women of the household giving the *combite*, aided by their female relations and the wives of friends and neighbors. This is no small task, for goats and even a bullock may be killed to feed a large *combite*, while in addition other dishes to go with the meat must be cooked. Each woman is given charge of a great pot and does her best to see to it that an appetizing dish is ready for the men when their work is done. While the food 496 is being cooked, the real object of the *combite*, the clearing 241 of the field, is being pursued. A *chef d'esquade*, usually with 461 a small group, begins the afternoon's labor, and, being a fast worker, he himself sets the pace. As more men arrive, he walks about, encouraging the constantly increasing number of men in their efforts, seeing to it that the tempo originally set is continued, and when necessary picking up a hoe to restore a lagging rhythm. Occasionally the *chef d'esquade* will [526] stand in front of the men to make sure that all keep together, and if the lazy cannot be roused to work by direct order or through ridicule, he will drive them away.

The work progresses with incredible speed as the line moves down the field. In one case a *combite* of between fifty and seventy-five men completely cleared a field of several acres in a single afternoon, and this without undue effort or what appeared to be the expenditure of much energy. The flashing of the hoes in the brilliant sunlight accentuates the color of the scene; each implement is raised high above the head of the one who wields it, to be brought down at the proper in-

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461 The *combite* songs are distinctive in Haitian music for
476 their melodic quality. Sung in unison, as is characteristic of
533 most forms of Negro music, they contain the statement of a theme by the leader and a response from a chorus, so that the contrast between this great volume of sound from the chorus and the solo voice of the *simidor* is singularly effective. It is not the melodic qualities alone that make these songs so
406 appealing to the Haitians, however. At the *combite* a man
533 not only learns all the gossip of the day, but enjoys learning
461 and singing the songs which caustically comment on the
626 shortcomings of neighbors, or evaluate the hospitality of those
203 who have called *combites*, or detail scandal, phrased with sufficient directness to allow the reference of the song to remain clear, but warily, so as not to give the individual pilloried ground for direct recrimination. The *simidor* is thus a person to be feared, since in addition to his ability as a singer and a leader of song, he is also an outstanding improviser. As one Haitian expressed it, "The *simidor* is a journalist, and every *simidor* is a Judas!"

406 One or two examples of these songs will make clear their
533 favor among a people to whose natural love of gossip is added
539 a patterned relish for oblique public statement of individual
471 shortcomings. The first comments on a miserly *combite* host:
461
626

À tè!	Down!
Moin dit, messieurs,	I say, messieurs,
Moin p'valé nan combite ça-é	I went to that *combite*
Moin pas mangé.	[But] I did not eat.
Moin allé, moin pas joinne un grogue	*I went, but I found no* drink
Pour moin buè.	To drink.
Assé-a! En é!	Enough! Up!
Moin dit, messieurs,	I say, messieurs,
M'allé nan combite ça-é	I went to that *combite*

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Moin pas joinne mangé	[But] I found no food
Pou' m'mangé.	To eat.

Another song refers to a pungent bit of local gossip, which, though known to everyone, concerned an affair that precluded the mention of names. This is usually the case, for it is not ordinarily deemed wise to make specific references; yet this must not be thought of as an invariable rule, as is shown by the fact that a number of these songs were recorded where names were mentioned with great freedom. Thus in Mirebalais as elsewhere, circumstances must govern cases; the composer of the following short song did not feel it politic to do more than recall the case:

Ca va reglé,	This will be arranged,
En é, o!	Up, o!
Affai' cousine germaine	The affair of a first cousin
A'c cousin germain.	With her first cousin.

Reference is also made to an impending quarrel where a suspicion of magic practices entered:

Moin dit, Juda,	I say, Judas,
Allé l'église;	Go to the church;
Quand ou apè tourné	When you return
Ou a quitté moin tranquille, o-o;	You will leave me in peace, o-o;
Si ou allé l'église,	If you go to the church,
Ou apè quitté moin tranquille, o-o.	You will leave me in peace, o-o.

Still another song is a challenge, for in it the singer boasts that he is the equal of the man figuratively designated in it, and will cause trouble if resisted:

À tè!	Down!
M'apé mandé qui moune	I ask what person
Qui en dedans caille là.	Is in that house.

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476 461 533 539

Compère répond':	My friend replies:
"C'e' moin qui avec cousine moin."	"It is I who am wih my cousin."
Assé-é!	Enough!
Moin en dedans déjà.	I am already inside.
En é-é-o!	Up, o!
Nan point taureau	No bull
Passé taureau.	Is better than [this] bull.
En é-o!	Up, o!

476 461 533 539 626

Finally, there may be cited a composition which complains against a shirker who comes and eats, but does littlework:

Samba, é-é,	Samba, é-é,
Moin vé ou malhonnet,	I see that you are a dishonest man,
Tonnèrre!	*Tonnèrre!* •
Moin planté maïs moin,	I plant my maize,
L'année rive,	The year rolls round,
Moin planté mangé,	I plant food,
Ou apè managé li.	You eat it.
En é-é-o!	In the air!
Moin planté zaboca,	I plant avocados,
Ça pou' ou mangé,	They are for you to eat,
Ou malhonnet-o.	You are a dishonest man-o.
Tonnèrre!	*Tonnèrre!*

241

The field cleared and hoed, the work of planting begins. This is carried on in accordance with a well-defind calendar of agriculture, which takes as its starting point the beginning of the rains. Maize, which matures quickly, is the first crop, and is planted during the latter part of March or early in April, unless the rains are delayed, when it is planted later that month. Congo peas, which mature less rapidly, are put

[195]

• *Tonnèrre*, "thunder," is a Haitian-French oath; the original is retained because in translation its force is lost.

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may next be considered. Two types of markets exist — those in the countryside where produce is often sold at wholesale, and the town markets where retail trading takes place. In Mirebalais, as elsewhere, the principal market day is Saturday, though smaller markets are held on Thursdays, and roadside gatherings of women offering small amounts of foodstuffs or cooked foods are to be found everywhere. The country markets occur at present only on Tuesdays, though in earlier times the markets shared the days of the week in rotation. To heighten the importance of the towns, however, and to encourage the peasants to work steadily in their fields by concentrating the time spent at market, it has been officially decreed that the schedule given above be followed. Before this, the rotation of the markets in the commune of Mirebalais was as follows:

MONDAY: Yalodoun; La Civelle; Landale;
TUESDAY: Mirebalais;
WEDNESDAY: Dufailly (a fairly large country market); Labouli; Colombie (a very large market);
THURSDAY: Mirebalais;
FRIDAY: Chambo and Canarde (the most important country markets in the valley);
SATURDAY: Mirebalais.

The Mirebalais market is located near the central square not far from the confluence of the Artibonite and Tombe rivers, though until relatively recent times it was held in the *place* before the church. It occupies a large fenced-in space reserved for the purpose, which on the days of the great markets hums with activity. Each tradeswoman has her place there, which she retains by a kind of informal agreement, held to so well, for all its informality, that if a woman is compelled to be absent for a time, those who sit near by watch it for her and warn anyone who takes it that it must be relinquished when the original occupant returns. If despite this warning

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the newcomer persists in retaining the place, an informal appeal is taken to the local magistrate, who invariably settles the matter by deciding in favor of the original occupant.

Each woman tends to specialize in certain commodities, such as meat or cloths or notions or baskets. The venders of foodstuffs, other than meat, however, vary their offerings with the season. This latter class of sellers mainly comprises women who, living in the town, constitute a group of "middlemen," either buying produce at the country markets, or, going off with their pack animals into the back country, return with saddle-bags loaded with the purchases they have made direct from the farmer.[8]

Country women are also well represented among the traders, and as they come streaming into town on market days with their head burdens, or driving the heavily laden, slow-plodding donkeys, they fill the streets with color and movement that make up one of the most picturesque aspects of Mirebalais life. A load may consist of one type of produce only, or a woman may bring rice, maize, beans, and bananas, as well as home-made brooms and baskets. All transactions in the market are for cash, and there is no barter of any kind, for the pattern of a money economy has been too deeply lodged in Haitian tradition to allow any other mode of exchange. Prices are based on supply and demand rather than on any agreement between sellers, since contact with the capital causes the current prices paid there for all kinds of produce to be generally known. Another factor which enters into price-fixing, however, is prestige. It is regarded as a mark of incompetence for a woman, whether from country or town, to return home with unsold produce, and since the reputation of being a clever trader is highly valued, this is avoided when at all possible, and the vender adjusts her prices as the day wears on to insure that she will dispose of everything she has brought.

In Mirebalais, as elsewhere, the markets are best attended during harvest months, when by official count as many as

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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he is assured of more solicitous care from her and more deferential treatment from her children. And though when this has occurred his "legal" wife may at his death come with a justice of the peace to claim his body and his effects, this move is anticipated, so that what he has given the *placée* wife and her children is usually well out of the way. "Often they find only the four walls of the house."

A certain number of unmarried men result from this system of plural matings, some of whom remain single by preference, particularly in the cities, where the incidence of homosexuality far exceeds that found in the country. In Mirebalais itself, when the final withdrawal of the American Marines from Haiti was being celebrated, a dance called *mazuba*, significantly enough the only one held indoors, was one in which male dancers danced together in couples. The sexual problem of the younger unmarried men is more often solved by means of liaisons with married women, though this has its dangers in the countryside, where the movements of every individual are known and the least tendency to unsanctioned social behavior is soon the subject for widespread gossip. Prostitutes are found everywhere, and they are by no means visited by unmarried men alone. On the whole, sex "adventures" are more indulged in by men than women, even allowing for the tendency of some women to have affairs with youths. A belief widely held, that plural wives tend so to exhaust the virility of a man that he must seek "remedies" of a magical nature from the priests of the *vodun* cult and from sorcerers, must also be mentioned. Frigidity is a principal cause for female homosexuality, and, because of a wife's reluctance to satisfy her husband, it not infrequently happens that she is sent back to her parents, where she may seek out other women. The most prevalent Haitian attitude toward homosexuality in either sex, it may be remarked, is one of derision rather than vindictiveness, as the term applied to effeminate men, *commères*, may suggest.

1: Herskovits I-4,5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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portance is being considered, particularly where the buying or selling of some land is involved, all the members of a habitation may be consulted and the opinion of the oldest man in the family, the "family head," is almost invariably followed. At the death of a man his widow inherits all his property for the duration of her lifetime or until she remarries. Her children by her dead husband, if minors, do not receive their inheritance at once, but the elders of the habitation of their father hold this property in trust for them and act as their guardians. The deities of the *vodun* cult are believed to be inherited in family lines, a tradition that gives the larger family one of its most pronouncedly African traits; while the accompanying African belief in the inheritance of the soul within the family, despite its existence in Mirebalais principally as a survival, is yet of importance in adding its sanction to help maintain the inner cohesion of the group.[3]

It may be well at this point to investigate the position, duties, and powers of the oldest male member of the group, who is the head of this informal extended family.[4] His house must be in the ancestral habitation, though he need not live in the same dwelling as his predecessor. Just as he is consulted on projects of a secular nature, his is the important voice in the worship of the ancestors and the family gods. He does not carry on the actual routine of the cult unless he is a priest, but no ceremony would be attempted without his consent and full instructions from him, and the call for the rite would be made in his name.

Examples of the exercise of his power in various circumstances are given. "He may threaten: 'Very well. If you will not listen, I am through. Do what you like.'" In such a case he will refuse "to extend his hand" when a member of his family meets some difficulty, and a man thus punished forfeits the outstanding economic advantage of belonging to his relationship group, the right to call on the members of his family for aid when he is in trouble. For otherwise all relatives

J: Herskovits E-4,8 (1934) 1937 SV3 Hald SV3
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help one who, for example, has run afoul of the law because of attendance at a forbidden *vodun* dance and needs a certain sum to pay a fine, or who in some dispute with a neighbor has had a judgment of the court entered against him. Obviously, therefore, the family head, who holds the power of withholding family support from one in need of it, is not flouted except under great provocation.

Another instance of the exercise of the family head's power is given when a man or woman desires to marry or to enter into the relationship of *plaçage* with someone held undesirable by the elders of his group. Should this oldest member in particular indicate his disapproval of the proposed match, it is most unlikely that the mating would take place. The reasons of the elders may be based on situations quite unknown to their younger relative who proposed the match; the existence of old enmities between the families of the two young people would perhaps necessitate inflicting the humiliation of a refusal when the "letter" was presented. If the young people persist, the elders may say: "Do what you like, but we will not support you," and should they fail to heed this warning, trouble for them is believed inescapable, since it is held that the elders thus place a curse on the new family. Nevertheless, when difficulties do arise that the two cannot cope with alone, the mother of the one in trouble would do her utmost to help, despite family displeasure, and would use all her gifts of persuasion to soften the attitude of the family elders until she succeeded in having the ones who had defied the family edict taken back into the group. Some degree of estrangement would persist and, as has been seen, might cause a man to find it desirable to make his home with his wife's people. The elders may also take the initiative in arranging marriages, exerting pressure on a reluctant young man whose inclinations have directed him elsewhere, in favor of a young woman of desirable family. But should such a marriage not

1; Herskovits E-4, 8 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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be successful, he can count on the members of his family for financial and moral support. 596 534

These are not all the rights of the older members of the family, especially of the family head, over their juniors. All elders may punish by beating, though the oldest member of the family exercises that right most freely and may chastise those who are themselves grown men and women. If there is gossip about a boy or a girl, the family head calls the culprit to reprimand him or, if he believes the case a serious one, to beat him. Among the peasants, particularly, grown men go down on their knees before their elders, when so ordered, for a beating. Such punishments may be particularly severe if the culprit does not soon ask pardon, for since all who are older have the right to beat a younger relative, it sometimes happens that the punishment administered by the head of the family is not considered adequate, and another takes up the stick when the family head has put it down, so that two or three wands may be broken over the back of a stubborn offender. If such a one were to fight back, he would become "accursed," ceasing any longer to be considered a member of the family, and even though no legal steps might be taken to disinherit him, he would lose all caste. This right to beat is accorded by custom rather than by law, but an adult beaten by one of the elders of his own family would think long before he would sue. "There is always a consultation, and a man is discouraged from going to court." 596 627 [626] [691]

Lest the impression may have been given, in considering the role of the elders and their relationship to the younger members of the family, that it is those in the father's line alone who are concerned, it must be emphasized that relatives of both parents exercise substantial control over a person. More than this, since marriage constitutes an agreement between families as well as between an individual man and woman, it follows that both paternal and maternal grand- 596 [581] [603]

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3 Mirebalais

parents are friendly toward each other, so that the conflict that might result from a division of authority rarely develops. Were it otherwise, it could easily happen that a person who had been ordered, or forbidden, to do something against his own wishes by the head of his paternal family would plead with the head of his mother's group and receive support to justify his disobedience. To most Haitians such a hypothetical incident was amusing to contemplate, for the elders are said always to work together. Rare is the occasion when one interferes with the decision of another, and never to the knowledge of the subject of such a decision.

A family elder who has no sons to care for him is well looked after by the other members of the group "until the grave." Fear as well as a moral obligation prompts this. "He might curse you," it is explained, or "He might say: 'Watch out for your own old age! You mistreated me in my old age, and you will suffer in yours.'" Such pronouncements are greatly dreaded, especially because of his control over the supernatural forces that aid or harm the family and its members.

The closeness of the tie between social institutions and economic life is most evident in the matter of inheritance. For though the prestige that accrues from the possession of wealth makes for strong competition through the exercise of individual initiative, yet supporting the struggle of an individual for the augmentation of his holdings are the forces of family sanction and family aid, while his very start in life is obtained primarily through the help of his relatives during their lifetime or the property he inherits from them at their death.

As has been suggested, all a man's children by a "legally" married wife inherit from him, or, if he has not espoused a wife by a Church wedding, the children of his *placée* wife or wives receive his property. Whether or not it is true that the "legitimate" children inherit three quarters of the possessions of their father, the "natural" children one fourth, and

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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a dowry forfeit their share, but even when a formal *dot* has not passed, the number of animals given her when she went to her husband is mentioned and she is sometimes asked to waive a corresponding portion of her share in consideration of what she has already received. If she refuses to do this, however, there is no recourse but to allow her her full share, though public opinion would censure such greed.

Debts incurred by the dead must be repaid before the estate can be settled, while attempts are also made to collect all loans made by him. Where no written statement of a debt exists, a declaration by the dying man before witnesses is necessary; otherwise his heirs acknowledge their obligation at their pleasure. Conversely, if no statement attested by a notary exists to verify a loan made by him, his heirs have no means of collecting it. On the whole, lending has been found through experience to be ill-advised unless such a "paper" has been executed before a notary, and land has been pledged as collateral either before the head of the family of the borrower or before a magistrate. For though interest is not demanded by the peasants, and loans are made as a gesture of friendship, "even the people of the hills"—to use the Mirebalais idiom for the most naïve rustics—have learned that just debts are often not repaid where there is no legally enforceable claim.

A man who dies childless leaves his property to his brothers and sisters by the same father and mother. The husband of a "legally" married woman who dies childless is said to have the right to one fourth of her property, the rest going to her relatives, but most often "they drive him away," giving him nothing, and since a man is customarily too proud to contest the matter, he does not insist on receiving his due. A childless widow continues to live in her dead husband's house until her death, and she also receives one fourth of her husband's property. At her death the house passes to her husband's relatives, but the quarter of his estate which she had received goes to her family.

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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been largely lost in the peasant culture, possibly because of a prudence dictated by conditions of life wherein evidences of the possession of wealth — certainly in the case of a peasant — were an invitation to those who would despoil him. Only when a family of position gives a ceremony, or when one of its members is married or dies, is the lavishness of its preparations such as to suggest the importance of its place in the community. This does not hold for the individual. Personal ostentation is the more strongly inhibited by the belief that another's envy may bring ill fortune to the one against whom it is directed. In Mirebalais it has almost become a byword that the really substantial citizens look as though they were the poorest. This tradition in no way interferes with the preoccupation with adding to one's possessions, or with the desire to exert the power and enjoy the position that go with a command of large resources, or the will to pass on as large an inheritance as possible to children. In their origin, such drives can be ascribed neither to Europe nor to Africa, nor, for that matter, to the experiences of slavery, but rather to the interplay of two homologous patterns of culture that has produced the economic system and the economic motivations found in Haiti today.

In the matter of land tenure, and in attitudes toward private property, African tradition has disintegrated almost completely. Under the characteristic West African form of land tenure, land of a tribe is vested in the tribal head, who allots it to families for use. Trespass upon it is not permitted while it is under active cultivation, and the produce of the land is the property of the one who has worked it. Only palm trees are privately owned by those who have planted them; otherwise land that goes uncultivated for a longer period than is necessary to restore its fertility may be re-allocated. In some regions land worked by an individual is his because of his membership in a large relationship group, whose ownership derives from the power of its ancestors who had lived on this

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1936) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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land, whose bodies are buried in it, and whose spirits watch over it. As has been shown in the discussion of property, land in Haiti is owned privately, and, once title has passed, is subject to no alienation, except at the will of the owner — an attitude also held toward property of other categories, as is evidenced by the fact that most of the possessions of a man, particularly his livestock, are marked for identification, and theft is severely punished. Even the disposal of stray animals whose owners cannot be identified must follow well-defined legal procedure, in accordance with which they are held by the officers of the commune for a stated period of time before being sold at public auction. All marks on these animals are carefully noted in the records, so that title to them may be duly established.

In the organization of production and distribution an African mold, if not full content, predominates. The co-operative work-system, which is so important in maintaining agricultural production, is directly related to comparable groupings of West Africa, of which a distinctive form is the *dokpwe* of Dahomey, described when the African origins of Haitian culture were examined. The *combite*, as an instrument of co-operative labor and mutual self-help, with its tradition of giving no pecuniary reward for work done, but of making the feast which comes at the end of the day's labor adequate return — all these represent pure retentions of African practice. Even more striking is the carry-over in the attitudes which go with these outer forms — the manner in which the participants look forward with pleasant anticipation to taking part in *combites*, the enjoyment which they derive from their group work, and the verve with which the work is done are clear expressions of these attitudes. The role of the *combite*-song in exercising social control and enforcing conformity to local custom is entirely African, as is its function in stimulating work by setting a rhythm for it.

African, too, is the institution of the market, though in this

2: Courlander B-S (1937-1954) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

approval of the candidate's elevation is needed. He is also regarded as being on more intimate terms with the family ancestors who, likewise, must be in accord with the proceedings. The candidate for the asson is confined within the hounfor for a number of days, during which he takes purification baths and participates in other rituals. The rites that take place during this period are prescribed by the elder priest who has assumed responsibility. When the purification is ended, the candidate emerges into the *peristyle* (roofed court) to participate in the general service, and to undergo further tests.

Present during the ceremonies are all the principal houngans of the region—men who will be friendly associates of the new priest or, possibly, unfriendly competitors. The candidate is tested on his knowledge of how to use the asson and the tiny hand bell, and in the course of the service he is mounted by the loa who is the chief protector of the cult temple. Animals are sacrificed, and all the loa sacred to the hounfor are invoked and asked for their approval and support. But it is not only the loa and the dead who must indicate their approval. The elder houngan polls the hounsi kanzo on whether they will accept their new cult chief and follow him. He also asks the chief drummer, who polls his assistant drummers. It is taken for granted that the decision is in the hands of the hounsi. The consensus is known before the actual service, but the formality of asking the question is observed. Should the hounsi refuse to accept the candidate for the asson, the elevation cannot take place.

The city and the countryside contain many self-styled houngans and bocors who are not recognized as bona fide by the community, regardless of the route by which they claim to have achieved their station. Sometimes they are regarded as *pas fort* (not strong); that is, they do not have profound knowledge and understanding. The Haitian is quick to detect the difference between a houngan who knows and one who does not know. Many are stated to be outright fakes. One man who attempted to hold a service in Port-au-Prince aroused such contempt and disgust that a number of persons who had been drawn by genuine interest walked out with remarks that the man should be punished. In fact, his failure to show any essential qualifications for the houngan's role was commented upon in a song of ridicule that made its appearance at a secular dance that same night. The song noted some of the humorous aspects of the service, such as when the "impostor" struck himself vigorously on the head with the flat of a machete to show his "strength" and virtually incapacitated himself for the rest of the evening.

It is easily observed that no two hounfors are exactly alike. They differ

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1965) 1960 8V3 Hait 8V3

Bumburu is walking, low hips!
Bumburu is going to walk, low hips!

Dumballa Wèdo, being a snake deity, "threads" or "winds" his way like a serpent, and this song describes a serpentine course taken by the dancers as Dumballa (here identified as a Nago man) arrives:

Fifé na fifé, Dumballa Wèdo vini wè moin!
Fifé na fifé, Nèg' Nago vini wè'm lè! [Ex. 74]

Wind, we wind, Dumballa Wèdo comes to see me!
Wind, we wind, the Nago man comes to see me here!

After the dancing has been going on for a long while and the pace is fast, there may be a song of banter, such as the following from the Dahomey rites. The dancers sing *lailé, lailé!*, describing a figure of the dance in which the skirts are swirled, and note that they have worn out the drummers. They even offer to carry on their backs those dancers who are ready to fall by the wayside:

Lailé lailé!
Oh lailé lailé eh vièx'!
Tambouyé bouké!
Tambouyé bouké vièx'!
Lailé lailé eh vièx'!
Lailé lailé tambouyé bouké houngan'm!
M'pa'vé nan cueye manin vié net!
Tambouyé bouké o!
Lailé lailé! [Ex. 75]

Lailé lailé!
Oh, *lailé lailé*, eh, old people!
The drummers are tired!
The drummers are tired, old people!
Lailé lailé, eh, old people!
Lailé lailé, the drummers are tired, my *houngan*!
I'll carry you on my back, old sister!
The drummers are tired there!
Lailé lailé!

Interspersed among the songs of the bounfor there are sometimes warnings or admonitions. Usually they are tangent and indirect in statement, and may be from the point of view of the lwa or of the houngan. In the following petro song, which accompanies the ritual of making magic, there is a warning to certain people who will feel the effects of the magic. The ceremony includes, among other things, the dropping of lemons, roots, and leaves by the houngan into his sacred basin or pond. The houngan sings:

H. Courlander B-S (1937-1955) 1960 'SVS Haiti SV3

Trois fil trois citron oh!
Trois fil trois citron oh!
Moin dit rewa, youn jour ou wa bewin moin!
Trois fil trois[illegible]cine oh!
Moin dit oui, youn jour ou wa bewin moin!
Gainyain bassin moin trois racine tombé ladans,
Quand ou wa' blié foo' ramassé chongé! [Ex. 76]

Three leaves, three lemons, oh!
Three leaves, three lemons, oh!
I say *rewa*, one day you are going to need me!
Three leaves, three roots, oh!
I say *yes*, one day you are going to need me!
I have my pond into which three roots fall,
When you wish to forget you will have to remember!

In another song the houngan warns against ingratitude on the part of persons for whom special magical services have been carried out:

Ouanga ça oh ouanga chaud!
Ouanga ça ouanga chaud!
Là pou' payé li pingo ou fâché!
Ou mandé'm ouanga là ou content!
Ou mandé'm ouanga là ou content!
Là pou' payé li pingo ou fâché! [Ex. 77]

This ouanga, oh, hot ouanga!
This ouanga, oh, hot ouanga!
When it's time to pay for it don't be angry!
You ask me for the ouanga, you are happy!
You ask me for the ouanga, you are happy!
When it's time to pay for it don't be angry!

Somberly and in metaphor, the deity Kitta Démambré speaks of an unhappy event which occurred in the town of Léogane, and warns those concerned that it must not happen again:

Kitta Démambré, pingo ou faî'm ça 'ouve oh!
Nan Léogane zi poule-là manzé nan zé!
Nan Léogane zi poule-là manzé nan zé oh!
Kitta Démambré, pingo ou faî'm ça ouvre oh! [Ex. 78]

Kitta Démambré, take care that you don't do that to me again, oh!
In Léogane the little chicken died in its egg!
In Léogane the little chicken died in its egg!
Kitta Démambré, take care that you don't do that to me again!

An unnamed spirit warns that the moment for placation has come and suggests that calling on him after he has gone from the *poteau* of the houngan Dorfa would be of no use.

2: Coulander 8-5 (1937-1953) 1960 8V3 Haiti 8V3

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M'apé rélé moin en bas pavillon las moin!
Laissé'm démélé moin en bas pavillon oh Derfa!
Jou'm allé pingo you kommain nom moin! [Ex. 79]

I will call, I am under the loa's canopy!
Let me get straightened out under Derfa's canopy!
The day I am gone take care they do not call my name!

In a lighter vein, to the gayest of music, there is this admonition that a wrong cannot be righted simply by saying "excuse me":

Ibo kôl!
Ibo kôl!
Filé pied'm ou mandé'm pardon!
Filé pied'm ou mandé'm pardon!
Ça pardon-lé wa fait pou' moin? [Ex. 80]

Ibo *kôl*!
Ibo *kôl*!
You step on my foot and ask my pardon!
You step on my foot and ask my pardon!
The pardon, what good will it do me?

And the deity Ogoun Kénison warns those who do not speak of him with respect that he is not ready to accept such a slight as a light matter.

Ogoun Yéklé Yéklé ça Nèg' Kénison él
Ogoun Yéklé ça Nèg' Kénison él
Oh tous les jours c'est pa'lé Ogoun mal!
Ogoun pas comm' batisé! [Ex. 81]

Ogoun Yéklé Yéklé there, man of Kénison!
Ogoun Yéklé there, man of Kénison!
Oh, constantly talking bad about Ogoun!
Ogoun doesn't like joking!

The loa Ogoun Panama, like ordinary mortals, is concerned about people who "come to look and go away to talk."

Ogoun oh m' c'est Nèg' Panama él
Ogoun oh m' c'est Nèg' Panama él
Yo vini gu'dé!
Yo vini pa'lé!
Oh Ogoun oh m' c'est Nèg' Panama él [Ex. 82]

Ogoun, oh, I am the Panama man *él*
Ogoun, oh, I am the Panama man *él*
They come to look!
They come to look!
Oh, Ogoun, oh, I am the Panama man *él*

2: Courlander 8-5 (1937-1965) 1969 8V3 Haiti 8V3

The loa Alson complains more vigorously of the bad behavior of human beings:

Alson Alson!
Dipis tempo y'ap pa'lé nou moin!
Coté ça yo gainyain?
Bouche à yo paya paya!
Djaule à yo pèté pèté!
Coté ça pou' yo pa'dem ah? [Ex. 83]

Alson, Alson!
For a long time they have been talking about me!
What's wrong with them?
Their mouths go *paya paya!*
Their jaws go *pèté pèté!*
What is the excuse?

Even on routine business the loa are inclined to be petulant, or to protest that they have been mistreated, that their followers gossip about them, or that they are not ardent enough. Here the deity Simbi en des Eaux complains bitterly that she is not loved by her servitors, the "leaves in the woods," and asks a houngi named Loio for news to take to spirits of the ancestors who live "below the water":

Fé nan bois con ça nou yé!
Nou point coinnin pas mandé quine!
Fé nan bois con ça nou yé!
Nou point coinnin pas mandé quine!
Simbi en des Eaux,
Qui sorti en bas dlaou!
Candé ça yo fai moin!
M'dit Loio, ba moin nouvelle pou'm ba yé! [Ex. 84]

Leaves in the woods, that's the way you are!
There is no love that does not ask to end!
Leaves in the woods, that's the way you are!
There is no love that does not ask to end!
Simbi en des Eaux,
Who comes from below the water!
See what they do to me!
I say, Loio, give me the news to give them!

But if the loa complain about the behavior of their followers, the servitors also may complain. Songs sung in the houmfor may chide the deities for antisocial deeds, for forgetting their "children," or for carelessness. In the following song the spirit Maît' Grand Chimin is criticized for mounting his "horses" with such fury that they are thrown about

2: Courlander 9-6 (1937-1950) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

[P. 139]

12. *Songs of Complaint, Recrimination, and Gossip*

The use of the song as a weapon of social criticism is an ancient and honored tradition in Haitian life. In West Africa it is common for villagers to air their complaints against, or their praise of, their neighbors, their chiefs, and the Europeans with whom they have dealings, by means of specially composed songs. Usually an ordinary offended person will not approach an official of prestige and denounce him straightforwardly. Such behavior might involve risks, or even violate social decorum. But an acceptable and effective way to make such criticism is through singing. It carries with it the sanction of propriety, custom, and good manners. The songs of criticism seek to air situations that otherwise might remain local or private affairs, and to set in motion public opinion. Thus there are songs which complain about a person's behavior, others that protest against injuries, and still others that expose an individual to ridicule. Often the themes are expressed indirectly by parable, sometimes directly. Among the Negro cultures of America the song of social criticism remains a vital and effective instrument for alleviating a sense of hurt and bringing offending persons before the bar of public opinion. It is found throughout the New World wherever Negroes have settled, from Brazil to the West Indies and the United States. In Suriname there is a formalized presentation of protest and derision songs called *kaba singi*, the function of which is to publicly embarrass and shame someone who has offended.[1] In the United States the song of criticism and complaint has survived strongly in the Negro work songs and blues, and has even infiltrated by this route into the popular "white" music of the country. Countless blues pieces complain of personal mistreatment by husbands, wives, and sweethearts; others, of hardships and injustice. Still others hold up the spotlight of ridicule. The subjects vary from sexual faithlessness to the rigors of prison.

In Haiti this tradition has remained vital and powerful. A work song

[1] [See Herskovits and Herskovits, Suriname Folk-Lore, pp. 23-32. Cf. p. 363, Category 18.—Author]

2: Courlander B-3 (1937-1963) 1960 SW3 11681 SW3

may sing that it is being driven too hard, or that it is underpaid. A president may be disparaged, a neighbor who has violated a social propriety may be ridiculed, and one who has committed an indiscretion may be exposed. Such affairs are the property of the community. They are gay or grim editorials on people and institutions. There is no special ceremonial occasion, as in Surinam, when criticism may be voiced. It can happen almost anywhere, at almost any time. Songs of ridicule or complaint may be heard at the ordinary "good time" secular dance, in the Rara festivities, or even in the middle of a Vodoun religious service. If the coumbites working in the fields are not singing songs of praise, the chances are they are singing songs of criticism. Even a lone worker may sing such songs, with the expectation that they will be heard and passed on. One woman I know, who had been abused in the market place of Port-au-Prince, composed a song of recrimination which she sang loudly all along the road to Kenskoff, some twenty miles away.

Even though the songs may be quite personal, referring to situations that affect only an individual or a small group of people, once they are performed in public they are community property. They survive or fade away according to the appeal they have for others. A song which catches on may outlive its protagonists by many decades. Such a song does not lose its moral point, if it has one, or its satirical punch. It can be revived for use on appropriate occasions—usually without change, sometimes with slight modification to give it direct and timely significance.

One of the recurrent themes of protest has to do with faithlessness of friends. This song, couched in bitter metaphor, declares that the only friends to be trusted are those who are not present:

Zanmi gade manie quinté ma zanmis loin manie yo!
Zanmi gade manie quinté ma zanmis loin manie!
Zanmi kité quoie c'est la'gous alor!
Zanmi gade mèlée'vèse couteau dèboul, quinté ma zanmis loin manie! [Ex. 94]

Friends close to me, go far away from me, friends!
Friends close to me, go far away from me, friends!
Friends far away from me are usual enemy!
Friends close to me are a two-edged knife, go far away from me, friends!

A variant of this theme goes:

Zanmi elle c'est pas zanmi pour' manie!
Zanmi elle c'est pas zanmi pour' manie toukment!
Manie pouté caille a li li ba manie chaise manie chimé!
L'ké pa'lé mal a manie!

2: Courlander 8-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

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That friend there, he is not a friend for me!
That friend there, he is not a friend for me, treason!
I pass his house, he gives me a chair to sit in!
He goes around speaking bad words about me!

Or again, you may hear:

Nèg' mwè, con ça ou yé, ago-é!
Nèg' mwè, con ça ou yé!
Y'ap manjé avé ou!
Y'ap boé avé ou!
Y'ap manjé lavie ou débat! [Ex. 95]

Black man, like this you are, ago-é!
Black man, like this you are!
He will eat with you,
He will drink with you,
He will eat the life out of you!

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A man regards his child's godfather as his closest friend outside the family circle. Should either of the two friends fail to fulfill the high standard of behavior demanded by their tie, the other may express disappointment and recrimination, as in this song:

Compè à moin compè ou malhonnête!
Ou malhonnête compè compè à moin compè ou malhonnête!
Premier pitit moin fai'm ba ou batizé!
Malheur rivé'm nan lesaison ou pas vini wè moin!

My comrade, comrade, you are dishonest!
You are dishonest comrade, my comrade, comrade, you are dishonest!
I gave you my first child to baptize!
When misfortune comes to me in the house, you do not come to see me!

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Sometimes even the most domestic of grievances are aired in public through means of song:

Lasaison ehé
Ste Hélène ehé
Lasaison ehé
Ste Hélène ehé
Trois pain soulaous mouri'm ba moin!
Malouloé pannd moin! [Ex. 96]

Lasaison, ehé
St. Hélène, ehé
Lasaison, ehé
St. Hélène, ehé
Three pairs of shoes my husband gave me!
This misfortune has taken me!

2: Coulander 8-5 (1827-1965) 1960 SV3 HaRI SV3

A protest theme that runs through many a song stems from the feeling of having been slighted or improperly received in the house of another person. The following song airs the complaint of a person who feels he has been treated shabbily. Metaphorically, he says he is used to eating from an earthern bowl but has been served food in a guard dish, from which only the poorest of people eat.

Mo 'hinal mangé nan balle,
M'pap mangé nan assis ciyé! [Ex. 97]

I'm accustomed to eating from a bowl;
I'm not going to eat from a cat guard!

Or again, there is the story of the unwelcome voyager, a person who travels all the way from Jérémie, far out on the southern peninsula, to the distant town of Arcahaye, only to find that he is not wanted there:

Moin sorti' Jérémie!
Moin passé Aux Cayes!
M'rivé L'Arcahaye, mes amis!
C'est moin même'yo pas vlé wé yà,
Moin yo wé!
C'est moin même yo pas vlé wé yà,
Moin yo wé oh!
C'est moin même yo pas vlé wé yà,
Moin yo wé oh!

I come from Jérémie!
I pass through Aux Cayes!
I arrive in Arcahaye, my friends!
It is me they don't wish to see here,
It is me they see!
It is me they don't wish to see here,
It is me they see, oh!
It is me they don't wish to see here,
It is me they see, oh!

A man complains sometimes of the work that has been foisted upon him by an employer, or by a neighbor with whom he exchanges labor:

M'pas moulwe oh moin pas moulwe oh!
Habitant passé moin pa'd café!

I'm not a mule, oh, I'm not a mule, oh!
The farmer takes me to carry coffee!

Even the officials of the *hounfor* may be publicly reproached in song for acts of injustice. In the following example the houngénikon, the Vodoun priest's assistant, is taken to task. The song probably was first heard in the course of a ceremony at which the houngénikon was present:

Dawomin y wa, houngénikon oh!
Dawomin y wa, houngénikon é!
Dawomin y wa, yo foti mangé moun manje!
Li moin vlé pa'd wé pas vlé moin pa'd!
Li moin vlé chanté me pas vlé moin chanté li!
Dawomin y wa, yo foti mangé moun moins! [Ex. 98]

Dahomey y ave,* houngénikon, oh!
Dahomey y ave, houngénikon, é!
Dahomey y ave, they ate me wrong!

* *The word Dahomey is frequently used as an exclamation.

2: Courlander 8-6 (1937-1950) 1960 SV3 11681 SV3

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When I want to talk you do not want me to talk!
When I want to sing you do not want me to sing!
Dahomey *y ave*, they do me wrong! *

Another note of criticism within the *hounfor* concerns a person who has been putting on airs of importance. The song states that he (or she) in reality has not even qualified for the lowest order within the cult, even though he behaves as though he were the cult chief:

Ou pave houngi oh!	You are not yet a houngi, oh!
Ou dit'm ou c'est houngan!	You tell me you are a houngan!
Ou pave houngi!	You are not yet a houngi!
Ou dit'm ou c'est houngan c'est ça!	You tell me you are a houngan, it is so!
Oh Paille à Terre!	Oh, Straw on Earth! †
Pauvre idiot!	Fool and gut
Oh Allada malade oh! [Ex. 99]	Oh, Allada is sick, oh! ‡

Poverty is so normal in Haitian life that a man who accumulates wealth in any form becomes conspicuous. Ordinarily he does not welcome this conspicuousness. It makes him a target of gossip and rumors, and of those who might wish to collect debts from him, borrow money, or obtain other favors. He becomes a *grow nèg'*, and finds himself increasingly cut off from the community of ordinary, poor people. Needless to say, Haitians, like other people, dream of striking it rich. Wherever poverty has been acute, whether in Europe, Asia, or America, the folklore is full of tales of finding great treasures. Haiti is no exception. Many Haitian folk tales and folk songs deal with this theme, particularly with obtaining wealth by magical or supernatural means. Sometimes riches are obtained through *engagements*, unholy compacts with devils or demons. In some stories lou facilitate the discovery of treasure, in others a powerful hocue accomplishes it through magical practices. If a man suddenly becomes well-to-do, therefore, rumors may spread in regard to how he came by his wealth. If he is suspected of dealings with devils or with a powerful hocue, his apparent success in his venture makes him a neighbor to be feared. To avoid incurring envy and hostility, people tend to play down their financial successes and pretend they have nothing in life but the clothes they wear, their houses, and their gardens. Spreading word that a poor man has hidden money is regarded as a mean and reprehensible act. Numerous folk songs protest against this injustice:

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[796]

Dèzantes wouhè manm konsa-wè!
Si m'kpè travaille lè manm cosa-wè,

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* Literally: They are my rights.
† An exclamation, the name of a certain mango.
‡ Allada, the name of a town in Dahomey, used by the name of "people of Dahomey." The line means, "Things are in a bad state of affairs."

3: Courlander 3-5 (1937-1963) 1960 BV3 1621 B73

Yo dit'm gainyain largent sèté, oh vrai!
Yo mèné complainnille oh là sou dos moin!
Oh yo mèné complainnille oh là sou dos moin!
Fai'm payé largent, *bwa*!
Manklé Bondieu pou' moin wè li, *oui* [Ex. 100]

Disaster descends on my yard!
If I work in the yard there
They say I have hidden money, in truth!
They plot behind my back!
Oh, they plot behind my back!
Make me pay money, *dear*!
I ask God to see it.

Another theme that runs deeply through Haitian life is the need for a mother. In a society where placage is normal and where fathers frequently are transient, the mother has been the stabilizing factor in family life. A *plaste* family might see the father only at certain times of the year. If he is a farmer, it will usually be when he comes to work his gardens; then he will move on to other gardens and possibly to another family elsewhere. The loss of a mother, under these conditions, is felt very deeply. Many Haitian songs, in various moods, emphasize the role of the mother in the house. Some of them are gay, like this one, with an undercurrent of sadness:

Oh dipis manman moin fai moin,
M'pas jamais wè manman moin!
Waille waille waille waille!
Waille waille waille waille!
M'pas connè manman moin!
Zandolite fai'm!
Mabouya fai'm!
Zandolite fai'm!
Mabouya fai'm! [Ex. 170]

Oh, since my mother made me,
I've never seen my mother!
Waille waille waille waille! *
Waille waille waille waille!
I do not know my mother!
A *zandolite* made me!
A *mabouya* made me!
A *zandolite* made me!
A *mabouya* made me!

The *zandolite* and *mabouya* to which the song refers are small lizards which constantly skitter about on the rocks and in the trees, as though they have no home. The metaphor is clear.

One more song on this subject stresses the importance of having a mother as compared, say, to an unreliable man:

Ma crié,
Oh que'm pauvre manman moin ma crié!
Ma pléré,
Oh que'm pauvre manman moin crié!
Que'm pléré' ou pauvre moin jaine' l'eau' clé

*Exclamation.

To go away and talk, eh!
Ogoun Balindjo
The eyes see, the mouth is closed, eh!*
Ogoun Balindjo
Don't you see they come to look at me?

Or again, the lea Ogoun and Loko Attiso are invoked to witness a person's misery, though in this song the cause is not explained:

Ogoun eh gi'ât mizè!
Papa Ogoun ou wa gi'ât mizè!
Gi'ât mizè eh Lok' Attiso gi'ât mizè li yè! [Ex. 105]

Ogoun, eh, look at my misery!
Papa Ogoun, you will look at my misery!
Look at my misery, eh, Loko Attiso, look at my misery here!

The impulse to criticism most often stems from personal injuries, but on occasion songs are used as a community affair to exert social pressures on an errant member of the neighborhood:

Fè' Jean-Pierre wa quitté kwè tafia!
Fè' Jean-Pierre ti cousse yo travaî!

Brother Jean-Pierre, stop drinking tafia!†
Brother Jean-Pierre, the little children are naked!

Although discussions of neighbors' affairs tend to have this moral tone, a vast number of songs are pure gossip and are sung for their ribald or wry humor, as the case may be. In some the objects of ridicule are named; in others the allusions are indirect, so that only those who are familiar with the situation will know the people concerned. Open quarreling often provides amusement and substance for satire. The community can scorn petulance, stupidity, and stubbornness through a confusion of charges and countercharges, and is quick to burlesque them. Thus there are public pressures against petty and needless disturbances. The following song refers to a dispute over ownership of an unnamed article.

Mais, dis c'est bagatelle grand monsieur Ogoû
C'est bagatelle grand monsieur Ogoû
Mais dis c'est mêlé grand monsieur Ogoû
C'est bagatelle grand monsieur Ogoû
Mais dis n'ap chaché li Ogoû
N'ap gouté li Ogoû
Mais dis c'est bagatelle grand monsieur Ogoû
C'est bagatelle grand monsieur Ogoû [Ex. 106]

* That is to say, the eyes should see and the mouth should be closed.
† Get alcoholic drink.

I say it belongs to the old man! *Ciyil!* *
It's the old man's thing! *Ciyil!*
I say it's the old man's affair! *Ciyil!*
It's the old man's thing! *Ciyil!*
I say I'll look for it! *Ciyil!*
I'm going to take it! *Ciyil!*
I say it belongs to the old man, *Ciyil!*
It's the old man's thing, *Ciyil!*

Another burlesque of a quarrel concerns a mother who has sent her daughter down to the river to do the washing. Some question arises as to whether the girl went down to the river at all, or whether she went elsewhere. There is implicit suggestion that the girl may have been at a rendezvous. The mother and the girl argue back and forth:

Main wapi Leonni nee dhow,	I sent Leonni to the water,
Li pee ahi!	She didn't go!
Main wapi Leonni nee dhow,	I sent Leonni to the water,
Li pee ahi!	She didn't go!
Main wapi Leonni nee dhow,	I sent Leonni to the water,
Li pee ahi!	She didn't go!
Main wapi Leonni nee dhow,	I sent Leonni to the water,
Li pee ahi!	She didn't go!
Leonni ooni oo si yi?	Leonni, where are you?
Li'm si yi!	I was there!
Li'm si yi!	I was there!
Li'm si yi!	I was there!
Li'm si yi!	I was there!
Li'm! [Ex. ray]	There!

Most of the scandal songs are fragmentary and tangent, though clear in implication, like this one:

C'est pas faute moins!
C'est pas faute moins!
C'est pas faute moins!
C'est pas faute moins!
C'est pas faute mais mmmmm!
C'est pas faute moins!
Gaiyain mmmm t'ap mambi dipi him!
Rwa wapi!
Gaiyain mmmm t'ap mambi dipi him!
Gaiyain mmmm mis hmmm h.
Pwati mmmlle eh, eri [Ex. rah]

It won't say look!
It won't say look!
It won't say look!

* Used as an exclamation.

3: Courlander 8-4 (1937-1965) 1965 593 Haiti 593

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* 539
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It wasn't my fault!
It wasn't my fault mother!
It wasn't my fault!
There was a man looking for a bargain!
Rara erupts! *
There was a man looking for a bargain!
There was a man in the yard,
Carry the news, oh, *oui*! †

Another scandal song, spiced with ridicule, refers tangently to a specific situation and points a moral:

Could li yé wailler-o! Could li yé wailler-o!
Could li yé wailler-o! Could li yé wailler-o!
Si ou prend yon femme pou viré lavé pied
Ou pas konnin manniè qui gen li yé! [Ex. coq]

Now she is there, wailler-o! Now she is there, wailler-o! ‡
Now she is there, wailler-o! Now she is there, wailler-o!
If you take a woman who doesn't want to wash her feet
You don't have to ask what kind she is!

(515) The practice of washing one's feet before an intimacy enters into numerous gossip songs. In the following one, the woman asks her friend Pierre for water to wash with so that she may take advantage of Joseph's absence in the city:

Ba moin dlaou nèg' moin pou' moin lavé pied moin!
Manzè dlaou moin cha' Pierre pou' moin lavé pied moin!
Manzè dlaou pou' moin lavé pied moin!
Joseph danger pas li, l'alé lavilla oh!
Joseph danger pas li, l'alé lavilla oh!

Give me water, my fellow, to wash my feet!
I ask for water, my dear Pierre, to wash my feet!
I ask for water to wash my feet!
Joseph who is dangerous is not here, he has gone to the city!
Joseph who is dangerous is not here, he has gone to the city!

Another bit of gossip with perhaps a more graphic account of the woman's deeds tells what happens in Achille's house when he isn't home:

Vini dè' chil!
Oh vini dè' chil!
Achille vini dè' chil!
Vini dè' chil!
Oh vini dè' chil!

---

* Exclamation.
† Exclamation.
‡ Exclamation.

Achille vini dè' dilì!
A lu papa vini gi'pun cuntì sun chumbì?
A lu papa vini gi'pun cuntì cubuni! [Ex. 119]

Turns his back and goes!
Oh, turns his back and goes!
Achille turns his back and goes!
Turns his back and goes!
Oh, turns his back and goes!
Achille turns his back and goes!
When papa turns, a man goes into his room!
When papa turns, a man climbs into his bed!

But a note of sympathy for Achille creeps into the last stanza:

Vini dè' dilì! — Turns his back and goes!
Vini dè' dilì! — Turns his back and goes!
Achille un pu nun cuntu chì! — Achille, you are not in the joke, eh!

In the following song, a young man confesses to having despoiled a girl and blemished the family's reputation, but he tells the father and mother not to worry about it.

Bonjou' bonjou' Mamma Sou,
Fille ou c'est perdu.
Bonjou' bonjou' Papa Sou,
Ti fille ou c'est perdu.
Pi, ma la ou l'a'gain.

Good evening, good evening Mother Sou,
Your daughter is ruined.
Good evening, good evening Father Sou,
Your little daughter is ruined.
Don't say a word, I will pay you for it.

An elderly gentleman named Alman fails to come out of his adventure with the same self-assurance, and the community takes full note of the details:

Alman allé bonbilé, — Alman went on a spree,
Alman allé bonbilé, — Alman went on a spree,
Alman allé bonbilé, — Alman went on a spree,
Li retou'né pinè cassé! — He came home with a broken heel
Pas pa'lé pasnin gin. — Don't say a word about it.
Si ou pa'lé pasnin gin — If you say anything about it
Gain yun grand nonm — There is an old gentleman
Qui va fâché! — Who will be angry!

[P 148]

13. Comments on the Mighty: Political Songs

The African-style song of social criticism has found no worthier subjects than the historic political figures of Haiti. There is no doubt that the African slaves used this art form to express their feelings toward the white masters as they had used it to comment upon the behavior of their own chiefs and fellow tribesmen. The worthy leaders were praised in song; the unworthy were castigated and their sins, failures, and social misdemeanors publicized in folk songs. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, slavery had come to an end in Haiti. The deep democratic sense of human dignity had outlasted the colonial masters and emerged tempered and sharp. The songs of criticism became not only comments upon political figures but campaign propaganda as well. They dwelt upon the accomplishments or faults of the candidates for political office. Friendly songs sought out every virtue, and invented others, in the man or woman being praised. Unfriendly songs leaked out and lacerated or poked biting fun at the subject, not even sparing his physical deformities.

Yet the political songs are more than statements of merit or fault. Cumulatively they are a kind of folk history of Haiti. No political aspirant ever went unsung by his peasant army, or unridiculed by his opponent's followers. The songs the people sang about their heroes and their enemies recall events and details that formal history has forgotten or ignored. The memory of the folk song is powerful and long. Some of the recollections go back more than a century.

History books tell us that in December, 1843, Major Charles Hérard ainé Rivière was elected to the office of the presidency, and that a new constitution was drawn up by the Constituent Assembly. The new constitution was an accomplishment of the liberal and democratic forces of the nation. It guaranteed certain civil rights to the people. It provided that judges be elected instead of appointed, abolished life terms for

2: Courlander 8-5 (1937-1945) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

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From Colonel Déro to Private Diplaso,
They marched with fanfare, a great army of foot soldiers!
He thought that he was king!
He thought that he was king!
He thought that he was king!
The Spaniards chased him, he ran like a dog after fresh carrion!

175 579 666 626 Forty-five years later, in 1888, there was a big political rally in Port-au-Prince. The two presidential candidates were General Séide Télémaque and Déus Légitime. Their supporters clashed near the palace, and Télémaque was killed in an exchange of gunfire. Légitime naturally was accused of having murdered his rival, though his supporters would not believe that he had committed such a crime. Evidence for a trial was entirely lacking, and Déus Légitime became president. But feeling ran high, and the followers of Télémaque began to sing:

*[533] *[539]

Écoutez chers amis l'histoire de Légitime!
Assassin de Séide, et lui est président!
Écoutez bien l'histoire, le gens du nord marchaient
Sur Port-au-Prince un fois pou' vengé la mort de Séide!
Allez au diable, bandit Déus!
Échappez vous, ingrat Déus!
Si vous perdre le temps, Déus,
Florvil vous fcura fusillé!

Listen my friends to the story of Légitime!
Assassin of Séide, and he is President!
Listen well to the story, the people of the north will march
On Port-au-Prince one day to avenge the death of Séide!
Go to the devil, bandit Déus!
Escape, ingrate Déus!
If you lose time, Déus,
Florvil will have you shot!

[69] Légitime had this possibility clearly in his mind. And the next year, when Florvil Gélin Hippolyte marched from the north with an army of *cacos* (peasant troops who hired out to political aspirants), Légitime hurriedly boarded a steamer in the harbor and sailed for Jamaica. Séide Télémaque was considered avenged, as the army bugles still bear witness. For now when the bugle plays reveille it is supposed to be saying:

*[539]

Séide Télémaque, Légitime has fled!
Séide Télémaque, Légitime has fled!

175 643 The new President, Florvil Hippolyte, died in office in 1896. J. N. Leger, a Haitian historian, tells soberly of Hippolyte's end in the following words.

named in the song has been dead for years does not seem to matter very much:

Mènè'm alè oh parkeur!	Take me to the parkeur!
Mènè'm alè!	Take me!
Mènè'm alè!	Take me!
Mènè'm alè oh parkeur Barnal	Take me to Barnal's parkeur!
Mènè'm alè oh! [Fa. 120]	Take me, oh!

Sometimes the challenge is directed to a more lowly level of authority, such as the gendarme:

Gendarme, mènè'm nan barnal
Rwo, gendarme oh! [Fa. 121]

Gendarme, take me to the police station!
Rwo, gendarme, oh!

Haitians are notable for their restraint from physical violence. During holiday celebrations it is not uncommon to see men who have drunk enough tafia to make them act up. Some of them may even be morose and bellicose. But the disturbances of the peace more often than not are verbal. So long as the first blow is not struck, the social pressures against violence operate effectively. But physical assault against an individual—a push, a blow, a slap—is an affront to personal dignity which relieves the victim of the social restraints and gives him the right to bodily revenge. I have seen waterfront rows, fierce and vocal, in which no one but the participants showed much interest. But should one man shove or strike another, the spectators would immediately interfere, for that single physical contact would have removed the barriers to the worst violence. Sometimes at carnival time a man assumes the guise of belligerence. Such a bully may roll up one trouser leg to indicate he is challenging all and sundry to a fight. Usually, passers-by move aside good-naturedly when he approaches. He is not taken seriously; but neither is he challenged, except by another man in the same frame of mind. When two men with rolled trouser legs meet, there may be a verbal encounter, possibly from opposite sides of the street, to the general entertainment of the bystanders. It is usually a serio-comic affair. Some of the folk songs memorialise occasions on which a man has publicly spoiled for a fight, real or imaginary. This song comments briefly on a man named Çalira, who looked for trouble:

Way way way!
Way way way!
Way way way!
Çac bien arrangé moyo yo!
Mèsi on bastòn lè!

2: Courlander 8-6 (1937-1968) 1960 BV3 11621 BV3

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539 EXAMPLE 178

Oum, eh, Lêê, eh!
Oum, eh, Lêê, eh!
They take the arum of the loa and serve evil, eh!
Let it sink!

[624] (The song criticizes someone who has become a houngan and has used his
[196] powers wrongly. Oum Lêê is the loa to whom the complaint is being addressed, or he may be the one lodging the complaint.)

EXAMPLE 179

Farmer, call the loa for me, *ago-dê*
Farmer, call the loa for me now,
Call the loa for me now,
Gède has engaged me!

[196] (Gède is a loa. *Habitant* signifies "farmer" or "peasant" but could be trans-
[192] lated as "countryman.")

EXAMPLE 180

Boulicha, I arrive,
See my misfortune!
I will cut them, I have no knife!
Boulicha Nago, I will cut them, *malovêt!*

[196] (The loa Boulicha Nago announces his arrival and complains that people
[198] have mistreated him. He says he will avenge himself without a knife. *Malovêt* is ritual language.)

EXAMPLE 181

I am going to see the houmi houmis, eh,
I am going to see if they are in accord with me.
Etc.

EXAMPLE 182

I cry honor before my loa's altar,
Cry honor, and no one replies!
I cry honor before my loa's altar,
Cry honor, and no one replies!
All who speak well [of me], I am here, I will listen, eh!
All who speak evil [of me], I am here, I will listen to them!
They sign my name, Alleluia, but they do not sign my feet,
I ask where will they see me!